An Update of Scotland's National Indicators of Child Neglect

Final Report – November 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The neglect of children is defined in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 as *"the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. There can also be single instances of neglectful behaviour that cause significant harm. Neglect can arise in the context of systemic stresses such as poverty and is an indicator of both support and protection needs"*

Neglect can affect all ages of children, with its impact felt from pre-birth through infancy, pre-school and primary school age to adolescence.

Development of the 2022 report

Professionals and policy makers recognise neglect as a key type of abuse, but there is not an agreed means of measuring neglect, whether in terms of its risk factors, incidence, or its impact on children. In response, an action of Child Protection Committee Scotland's 'Neglect Framework' (full title: Child Neglect in Scotland: Understanding Causes and Supporting Families; CPC Scotland, 2021) was to establish a means of measuring and monitoring neglect at the population level in Scotland.

In spring 2022, members of CPC Scotland's Neglect Sub-Group came together in a workshop facilitated by CELCIS to consider and map out indicators that could be used to measure and monitor neglect in Scotland. Drawing on the indicators suggested, CELCIS collated and provided analysis of the available indicators and presented these in A Review of Scotland's National Indicators of Child Neglect (CELCIS, 2022).

Aims of the 2024 report

Two years on from the initial national report, CPC Scotland's Neglect Sub-Group agreed that a meaningful period of time had elapsed to assess whether neglect in Scotland as measured by the report's indicators had changed. CELCIS has again undertaken this work, reviewing and updating the indicators where data is available, and introducing a small number of new indicators where these have become available since the 2022 report.

In presenting the indicators, the caveats from the 2022 report remain:
- Neglect is a multi-faceted type of harm and cannot be measured by one single indicator. The report instead uses a suite of indicators that, when analysed as a collective, can provide insight into the nature and prevalence of neglect at a population level.
- The report has only used existing indicators and not sought to collect additional, new data. Taking this approach means that the use of data already collected and/or published in Scotland is maximised, but it also means that data gaps may remain unfilled. Where gaps exist, the report has highlighted these as potential areas for future data work (Appendix 1).
- Most of the indicators are proxy indicators. This means that the indicators have been developed for different measurement purposes (e.g. to measure public health or educational attainment levels) but they have been incorporated into the report

as they tell us something about neglect. The extent to which they are strong or weaker indicators of neglect will vary – and this has been considered by referring to 'risk factors' and 'impact' indicators of neglect (see next page).
- The indicators are not designed to be used as a means of assessing the neglect of individual children.

Structure of the report

Neglect is a multi-faceted type of harm, with Horwath[1] (2007) finding that a child may be neglected through a failure to meet medical, nutritional, emotional, educational and physical needs and a lack of supervision and guidance. There is also increasing recognition in the academic and policy literature of neglect at the societal or state level, e.g. from the impact of child and family poverty and reductions in public services, that can increase or exacerbate the risk factors of neglect. These understandings of neglect provide the structure to the report, with it organised using the sub-headings of:
- Societal neglect.
- Medical neglect.
- Nutritional neglect.
- Physical neglect.
- Lack of supervision and guidance.
- Emotional neglect.
- Educational neglect.

For each of the indicators, their definition, source, availability at local authority area level (in case Child Protection Committees wish to replicate this exercise at their local level), annual data for 2018-2023 (where available), and an assessment of whether the trend has been improving, worsening or is unclear/staying the same has been presented. To help boost the accessibility of the report, 'easy read' names of indicators have been provided alongside their technical definitions.

The report also recognises that different indicators tell us different things about neglect. The report has therefore sought to set out for each indicator whether it is an indicator that tells us about the:
- Risk factors associated with neglect – i.e. factors that can contribute to the neglect of children.
- Impact of neglect on children – i.e. indicators that children have experienced some form of neglect.

The report's groupings of indicators (e.g. by type of neglect or type of indicator) will not be perfect. However, it is hoped that the approach to organising and analysing the data is helpful and one that can be reviewed and refined by future iterations.

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[1] Horwath, J (2007) *Child Neglect: Identification and Assessment*. Palgrave Macmillan.

SOCIETAL NEGLECT

To set the wider context to the data reported in this report, the first set of indicators presented relate to societal or state neglect. Collectively they show that many children and families are experiencing financial pressures.

- Relative and severe child poverty remain high, affecting 26% and 17% of children respectively. This means that 200,000 to 250,000 children are experiencing poverty in Scotland.
- There are estimated to be 9% or 79,000 children in Scotland living in households experiencing long-term worklessness.
- Linked to the poverty data, Trussell Trust foodbank statistics show the number of parcels distributed to children in Scotland has increased over time and reached a historic high of 88,809 parcels to children in 2023.
- Homelessness continues to increase and the two measures used show record numbers of children associated with applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, or living in temporary accommodation.

A new indicator included in the 2024 report is the number of young carers who had a support plan or were supported by local authority services. The number of reported carers has increased but this could in part be explained by the Carers Census becoming more established, while the publication also acknowledges that the data will likely be an undercount of the true number of carers being supported by local services, as complete returns were not received from all areas. Notwithstanding these caveats, the Carers Census 2022/23 publication does offer the additional analysis that:

- 35% of young carers provided at least 20 hours caring per week.
- 89% of young carers reported an impact on their emotional wellbeing due to their caring role.
- 15% of young carers lived in areas within the most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile, while 4% lived in areas within the least deprived SIMD decile.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Child poverty	Children living in relative poverty: below 60% of median income (%)	Risk factor	https://data.gov.scot/poverty/download.html	NO	23.6	22.9	26.4	NA	22.6	25.8	
	Children living in severe poverty: below 50% of median income (%)	Risk factor		NO	18.3	15.6	20.2	NA	16.4	17.1	
Workless households	Children living in long-term workless households: all adults have not worked for at least 12 months (%)	Risk factor	https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/datasets/dchildrenlivinginlongtermworklesshouseholdsandworklesshouseholdsbyregion	NO	10.0	9.1	9.9	11.0	9.0	NA	
Foodbank use	Foodbank parcels distributed to children – Trussell Trust (number)	Risk factor	https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/#children	YES	55,977	71,448	81,055	78,055	71,004	88,809	

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Homeless-ness	Children associated with applications assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness (number)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-2022-23/	YES	15,795	16,016	16,119	12,358	14,830	16,263	■
	Children in temporary accommodation (number)	Risk factor		YES	6,615	6,795	7,355	7,575	8,805	9,595	■
NEW: Young carers	Unpaid young carers (aged under 18) who had a support plan or were supported by local services (number)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/collections/carers-census/	NO	NA	NA	4,390	4,390	5,490	6,800	N/A

MEDICAL NEGLECT

Maternity Indicators

Two of the three maternity indicators are showing an improving trend, with falling levels of smoking among pregnant mothers, and proportionately fewer babies born small relative to their gestational age. Applying the indicators to the 45,061 babies born in 2023, the data indicates that:
- Up to 3,700 pregnancies are not booking their antenatal appointment within 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- Up to 5,000 mothers are smoking in pregnancy.
- Up to 2,250 babies are born small relative to their gestational age.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Pregnancy booking	Maternal booking appointment: Antenatal booking within 12 weeks (%)	Risk factor	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/antenatal-booking-in-scotland/antenatal-booking-in-scotland-calendar-year-ending-31-december-2023/	YES	NA	NA	93.7	93.9	92.8	91.8	
Smoking in pregnancy	Maternal smoking status at booking appointment: Current smoker (%)	Risk factor		YES	NA	NA	12.6	12.1	11.9	11.0	
Babies born small	Babies born that are small for gestational age (%)	Impact	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/births-in-scotland/births-in-scotland-year-ending-31-march-2023/	YES	5.7	5.2	5.3	5.0	4.8	5.0	

Early Years Indicators

In 2022, there were 247,737 children aged 0-4 year olds living in Scotland. For this population, the key messages are:
- Immunisation rates of babies remain high with only 5% of (or 2,250) babies not immunised for the 6-in-1 primary course by 12 months of age. However, immunisation rates have fallen slightly and this trend is explored in Public Health Scotland (2024) Understanding and Addressing Declines in Childhood Immunisations.
- The Universal Health Visitor Pathway has been embedded over the 2018-2023 timeframe and coverage/uptake rates are approaching 90% for 13-15 month and 27-30 month old children. Coverage rates for all three age groups are, however, showing some signs of decreasing and this is most apparent among 4-5 year olds where it fell to 74% in 2023.
- Across all three age groups, there are increasing proportions of children recorded as having a developmental concern, with this highest at 18% of children aged 27-30 months. Across the three reviews, an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 children aged 1-5 years old have an identified developmental concern.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Immuni-sations of babies	Immunisations – uptake of 6-in-1 primary course by 12 months of age (%)	Risk factor	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/childhood-immunisation-statistics-scotland/childhood-immunisation-statistics-scotland-quarter-and-year-ending-31-march-2024/	YES	95.9	96.1	96.5	96.4	95.7	95.0	🟥
Health Visitor assessments of infants taking place	Coverage of 13-15 month Health Visitor review (%)	Risk factor	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/early-child-development/early-child-development-statistics-scotland-2022-to-2023/	YES	53.0	71.6	87.9	90.6	89.6	89.7	🟧
	Coverage of 27-30 month Health Visitor review (%)	Risk factor		YES	90.5	91.7	89.4	91.0	89.6	88.0	🟥
	Coverage of 4-5 year Health Visitor review (%)	Risk factor		YES	22.5	38.5	73.1	84.1	80.8	74.3	🟧
Infants with development al concerns	13-15 month old children with a concern about any developmental domain (%)	Impact	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/early-child-development/early-child-development-statistics-scotland-2022-to-2023/	YES	10.3	11.5	9.7	9.6	11.9	12.5	🟥
	27-30 month old children with a concern about any developmental domain (%)	Impact		YES	15.4	14.5	14.3	14.9	17.8	17.9	🟥
	4-5 year old children with a concern about any developmental domain (%)	Impact		YES	10.2	12.2	13.1	12.8	15.3	16.6	🟥

Adolescent Indicators

Only one adolescent medical neglect indicator has been identified: the proportion of children admitted to hospital with an alcohol condition. For the indicator, there has been a downward trend to 855 children in 2022.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Children with alcohol conditions	Children and young people (0-19 years) as alcohol condition hospital patients (number)	Impact	https://www.opendata.nhs.scot/dataset/alcohol-related-hospital-statistics-scotland	NO	966	1,008	1,008	915	855	NA	🟩

NUTRITIONAL NEGLECT

Indicators relating to unhealthy weight, eating of breakfast, and dental hygiene have been identified – noting some of these could also be classified as medical neglect indicators.

- For unhealthy weight, Body Mass Index (BMI) data for Primary 1 children finds that the proportion of children:
  - At risk of being underweight is small at 1% of (or 500) Primary 1 children but has been increasing from 0.8% in 2021 to 1.3% in 2023.
  - At risk of being obese has returned to its 2018-2020 level of around 10%, having been as high as 16% of Primary 1 children in 2021.
- Survey data is referred to for understanding breakfast eating rates among children aged 10 and above, and both sources indicate that at least one fifth of these children do not have breakfast on weekdays, with the proportion increasing as children grow older.
- Survey data is also used for a new indicator theme of children going hungry. Health and Wellbeing Census data finds that 8% of children aged 10 and above always or often go to school or bed hungry, while a further 26% report they sometimes go to school or bed hungry.
- National Dental Inspection Programme data indicates that dental hygiene is fairly static, with 20%-25% of (or 90,000) primary school age children having obvious dental decay. Survey data of 11-15 year olds suggests that only 75% brush their teeth twice a day and self-reported dental issues are higher than that found by the National Dental Inspection Programme.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR		INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Under-weight children	P1 children with a BMI 'at risk of underweight': Epidemiological (%)		Impact	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/primary-1-body-mass-index-bmi-statistics-scotland/primary-1-body-mass-index-bmi-statistics-scotland-school-year-2022-to-2023/	YES	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.1	1.3	(red)
Obese children	P1 children with a BMI 'at risk of obesity': Epidemiological (%)		Impact		YES	10.2	10.3	10.4	15.5	11.7	10.5	(orange)
Having breakfast	Children reporting eating breakfast every morning on weekdays (%)	• 11 year olds • 13 year olds • 15 year olds	Risk factor	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey - https://data-browser.hbsc.org	NO	76 60 51	NA	NA	NA	65 49 46	NA	NA
	NEW: P5-S6 pupils who report they never usually have breakfast on weekdays (%)		Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-and-wellbeing-census-scotland-2021-22/documents/	YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.1	NA	NA

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR		INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
NEW: Going hungry	P5-S6 pupils who report that they always or often go to school or bed hungry (%)		Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-and-wellbeing-census-scotland-2021-22/documents/	YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.3	NA	NA
	P5-S6 pupils who report that they sometimes go to school or bed hungry (%)		Risk factor		YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	25.8	NA	NA
Teeth brushing	Children reporting brushing teeth twice a day (%)	• 11 year olds • 13 year olds • 15 year olds	Risk factor	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey - https://data-browser.hbsc.org	NO	73 74 79	NA	NA	NA	73 73 79	NA	NA
Dental decay	P1 children with obvious decay in their primary teeth (%)		Impact	https://ndip.scottishdental.org/	YES	28.9	NA	26.5	NA	26.9	NA	
	P7 children with obvious decay in their primary teeth (%)		Impact		YES	NA	20.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

The indicators identified under physical neglect are the most acute measures of child neglect as they relate to child protection registrations, referrals to the Children's Reporter, Compulsory Supervision Orders, and crimes recorded by Police Scotland.

The analysis begins with a chart that compares the (other) concerns recorded for children registered with neglect to children where neglect is not a recorded concern.

The chart shows the non-neglect concerns recorded at Child Protection Registration for the children newly registered in 2022-23. The children newly registered are split into two groups:

- The 1,228 children where neglect was recorded as a concern at registration.
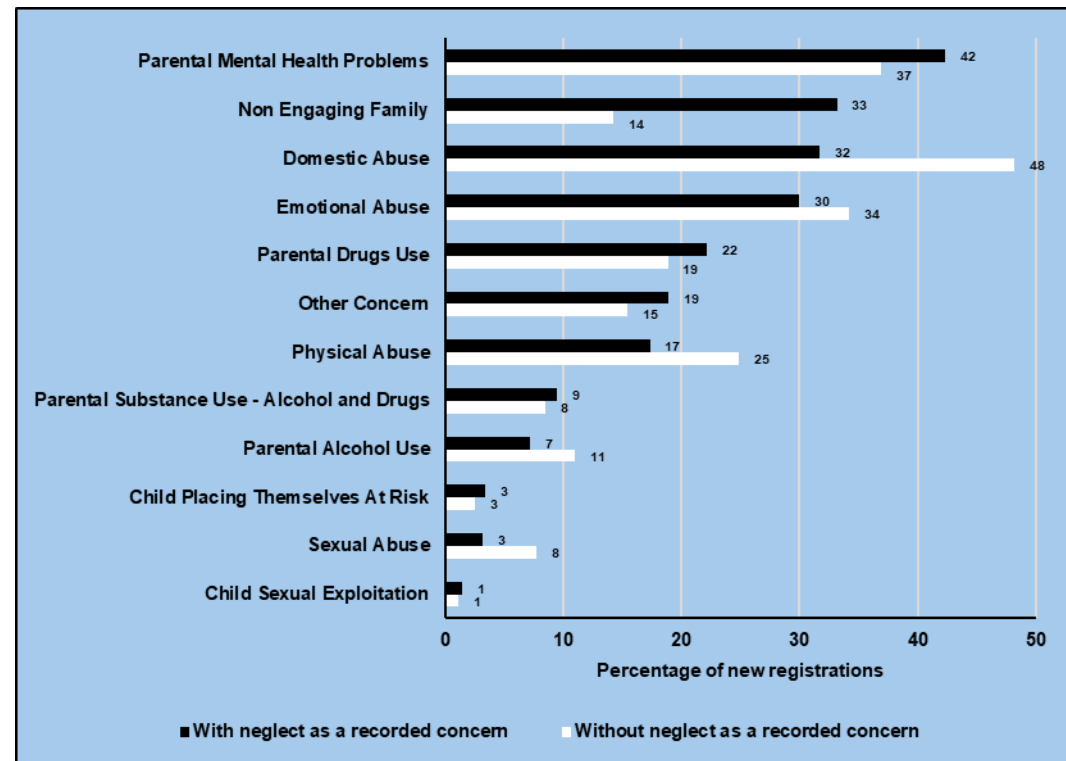- The 2,003 children where neglect was not recorded as a concern at registration.

The analysis shows children where neglect was recorded as a concern at registration were more likely to also have the following concerns recorded:

- Non-engaging family (33% versus 14% of children where neglect was not recorded).
- Parental mental health problems (42% versus 37%).
- Parental drug use (22% versus 19%).
- Other concerns (19% versus 15%).

Conversely, children where neglect was not recorded as a concern were less likely to also have concerns of:

- Domestic abuse (32% versus 48% of children where neglect was not recorded).
- Physical abuse (17% versus 25%).
- Sexual abuse (3% versus 8%).

Other Concerns on Registration: Children with Neglect and without Neglect (% of New Registrations, 2022/23)

Considering other indicators:

- The number of children newly registered on the child protection register with neglect recorded as a concern fell from 1,610 children in 2019 to 1,228 children in 2023. The proportion of all new registrations where neglect was a recorded concern has fallen to 40% of registrations from a high of 45% in 2021, but the proportion is still higher than the 36-37% in 2018-2019.
- Non-engaging families are a concern closely connected to neglect. The number of children registered with this concern has fallen from 1,011 children in 2019 to 703 children in 2023, but the proportion of all new registrations where non-engaging families was a recorded concern has not changed significantly and stands at 22% of registrations in 2023.
- Referrals and Compulsory Supervision Orders data from the Children's Reporter show a more pronounced trend of falling numbers attributed to 'lack of parental care'.
- Police Scotland data on the number of cruel and unnatural treatment of children offences has fluctuated at approximately 600 recorded crimes per annum.
- Hospital admissions of 0-14 year olds for unintentional injuries shows an improving trend with rates of admissions progressively decreasing from 2018 to 2023.
- Child deaths data shows an unclear trend over the five year period, but the latest 2023 data does show an increase. Every child death is reviewed by the National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People and the National Hub's latest report states the most common causes of death by age group were:
  - 'Perinatal / neonatal event' for children aged under 1;
  - 'Other' for 1-4 year olds (which includes respiratory disorders, epilepsy, metabolic disorders, anoxic brain damage, and sequelae of stroke);
  - 'Malignancy' for 5-9 year olds;
  - 'Other' for 10-14 year olds (which includes epilepsy, intestinal disorders, cerebral palsy, disorder of the brain, cardiomyopathy, intracerebral haemorrhage and cerebrovascular disease); and
  - 'Suicide or deliberate self-inflicted harm' for 15-17 year olds.

As the data collected by the National Hub grows over time, its collated dataset will increasingly become an invaluable source of evidence for understanding the relationship between neglect, other forms of abuse, wider child and family contextual factors, and child deaths.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Neglect leading to child protection registration	Children newly registered with Neglect as a recorded concern (number)	Impact	https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2022-23-child-protection/	NA	1,596	1,610	1,565	1,452	1,395	1,228	🟩
	Children newly registered with Neglect as a recorded concern (% of new registrations each year)	Impact		NA	36.6	36.2	39.1	45.0	42.5	39.9	🟧
Non-engaging family leading to child protection registration	Children newly registered with Non-Engaging Family as a recorded concern (number)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2022-23-child-protection/	NO	870	1,011	886	777	766	703	🟩
	Children newly registered with Non-Engaging Family as a recorded concern (% of new registrations each year)	Risk factor		NO	22.0	21.7	23.5	27.0	23.3	21.8	🟧
Lack of parental care	Children referred to the Children's Reporter on 'Lack of Parental Care' grounds (number)	Impact	https://www.scra.gov.uk/official-statistics/	YES	4,623	4,201	4,230	3,449	3,404	3,208	🟩
	NEW: Children referred to the Children's Reporter on 'Lack of Parental Care' grounds (% of all children referred each year)	Impact		YES	34.9	32.6	32.9	35.7	33.1	29.8	🟩
	Children with Compulsory Supervision Order made on 'Lack of Parental Care' grounds (number)	Impact		YES	1,706	1,732	1,604	921	1,360	1,201	🟩
Neglect crimes	Cruel and unnatural treatment of children offences (number of crimes recorded)	Impact	https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/svplwv3q/management-information-force-report-quarter-4-2022-23.xlsx	YES	564	717	568	589	530	626	🟧
Hospital admissions for unintentional injuries	Rate of 0-14 year olds admitted to hospital for unintentional injury (Rate per 100,000)	Impact	https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/unintentional-injuries/unintentional-injuries-hospital-admissions-year-ending-31-march-2023-and-deaths-year-ending-31-december-2022/	YES	840.9	831.3	827.8	711.8	695.1	656.1	🟩
Child deaths	Babies up to 1 years old	Impact	https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/deaths-time-series-data	YES	163	165	146	186	165	184	🟥
	Infants aged 1-2 years	Impact		YES	18	26	17	22	19	21	🟧
	All under 18 year olds	Impact		YES	296	292	272	306	270	308	🟥

LACK OF SUPERVISION AND GUIDANCE
The indicators identified under lack of supervision and guidance relate more to older children.
- Police Scotland data on the number of children reported missing fell between 2018 and 2021. The number increased to 10,165 children in 2023 but fell to 9,588 children in 2024 (see note to table). Four-weekly 'looked after' and all children missing person investigation data for Scotland and local authority areas can be found on the Vulnerable Children and Adult Protection Monitoring dashboard.
- Survey data from 2022 finds that 46% of 15 year olds reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, while 11% reported smoking on a weekly basis.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Missing children	Number of children reported missing	Impact	National data sourced from Police Scotland for this paper, but local data can be sourced from the Vulnerable Children and Adult Protection Monitoring dashboard	YES	14,013	12,831	9,002	7,124	8,947	10,165	
Teenage drinking	Children reporting drinking of alcohol in last 30 days: 15 year olds (%)	Risk factor	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey - https://data-browser.hbsc.org	NO	44	NA	NA	NA	46	NA	NA
Teenage smoking	Children reporting as a current smoker: 15 year olds (%)	Risk factor		NO	11	NA	NA	NA	11	NA	NA

Note: Police Scotland have also provided data on the number of children reported missing for 2023-24, with 9,588 children reported missing.

EMOTIONAL NEGLECT

The indicators set out under emotional neglect relate to child protection registrations with emotional abuse and domestic abuse as recorded concerns, and indicators relating to the levels of family support reported by children. A further indicator has been presented relating to parents' own reporting of their confidence in their parenting.

- Child protection registration data shows domestic abuse and emotional abuse are prominent categories, with domestic abuse continuing to be a concern recorded for over 40% of registrations in 2023. The proportion of registrations where emotional abuse is recorded as a concern has fallen from 40% of registrations in 2019 to 33% in 2023.
- From the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey, between 50% to 75% of 11-15 year olds in 2018 reported that they had high levels of family support.
- From the Growing Up in Scotland study, only 1% of S3 children in 2020 felt their parents do not pay attention to them or would provide help to them if needed.
- Also from the Growing Up in Scotland study, 6% of parents in 2020 felt moderately or very incompetent and lacking in confidence in their parenting.
- Two new indicators come from the Health and Wellbeing Census and show that 9-11% of P5-S6 children disagree that adults are good at listening to what they say or are good at taking what they say into account.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Domestic abuse leading to child protection registration	Children newly registered with Domestic Abuse as a recorded concern (number)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2022-23-child-protection/	NO	1,584	1,763	1,756	1,619	1,521	1,344	
	Children newly registered with Domestic Abuse as a recorded concern (% of new registrations each year)	Risk factor		NO	37.3	41.0	44.3	46.8	46.3	41.6	
Emotional abuse leading to child protection registration	Children newly registered with Emotional Abuse as a recorded concern (number)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-2022-23-child-protection/	NO	1,675	1,705	1,507	1,323	1,221	1,051	
	Children newly registered with Emotional Abuse as a recorded concern (% of new registrations each year)	Risk factor		NO	39.4	39.7	38.0	38.3	37.2	32.5	

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR		INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Family support	Children reporting high family support (%) olds	• 11 yr olds • 13 yr olds • 15 yr olds	Risk factor	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey - https://data-browser.hbsc.org	NO	74 58 51	NA	NA	NA	69 57 45	NA	NA
	Children (S3 pupils) feel their parent(s) do not pay attention to me (%)		Risk factor	Scottish Government (2022) Life at age 14: initial findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study	NO	NA	NA	0.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Children (S3 pupils) feel they cannot count on their parent(s) to help me when I have a problem (%)		Risk factor		NO	NA	NA	1.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Parental confidence in their parenting	Parents feeling moderately or very incompetent and lacking in confidence in their parenting (%)		Risk factor	Scottish Government (2022) Life at age 14: initial findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study	NO	NA	NA	6.1	NA	NA	NA	NA
NEW: Support from adults	P5-S6 pupils who disagree that adults are good at listening to what I say (%)		Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-and-wellbeing-census-scotland-2021-22/documents/	YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.1	NA	NA
	P5-S6 pupils who disagree that adults are good at taking what I say into account (%)		Risk factor		YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	10.9	NA	NA
	P5-S6 pupils who state that they do not have an adult in their life who they can trust and talk to about any personal problems (%)		Risk factor		YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.6	NA	NA

EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

Education indicators for 2020 and 2021 were difficult to interpret with certainty due to the impact of COVID-19 and consequent school closures and periods of pupil self-isolation. With this caveat, the educational neglect indicators identified below are:

- Pupil attendance levels have been worsening. On average:
  - Primary school pupils attended 92% of school dates in 2023, falling from 95% in 2019.
  - Secondary school pupils attended 88% of school dates in 2023, falling from 91% in 2019.
- Offering a different trend to attendance rates, the rate of pupils being excluded has been fluctuating.
- Primary school age attainment levels have been improving from 2018 to 2023, noting these had dipped in 2021 but have since recovered and are higher than in 2018.
- For adolescents, around 4% of children leave school with no or low qualifications. In terms of the destinations of all school leavers, around 4% leave school and become unemployed or economically inactive, with the proportion falling from 7% in 2019.
- From the Growing Up in Scotland study, 11% of parents in 2020 reported they did not participate in any activities at their child's school in last year.
- A new indicator from the Health and Wellbeing Census finds that 10% of P5-S6 children disagree that they have an adult to talk to at school if they are worried about something.

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
Attending school	Primary school pupil attendance – when schools open, half days (%)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-attendance-and-absence-statistics/	YES	NA	94.5	NA	94.0	NA	92.2	(red)
	Secondary school pupil attendance – when schools open, half days (%)	Risk factor		YES	NA	90.7	NA	89.1	NA	87.7	(red)
Excluded from school	Pupil exclusions (rate per 1,000 pupils)	Impact	https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-exclusion-statistics/	YES	NA	21.6	NA	11.9	NA	16.6	(amber)
Attainment among primary school children	P1, P4 & P7 Pupils combined achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence Levels: • Reading (%) • Writing (%) • Listening & Talking (%) • Literacy (%) • Numeracy (%)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/achievement-curriculum-excellence-cfe-levels-2022-23/documents/	YES	79.2 74.3 85.2 71.4 78.4	79.8 75.1 85.9 72.3 79.1	NA NA NA NA NA	75.2 69.8 82.7 66.9 74.7	78.2 73.1 85.5 70.5 77.9	79.8 75.1 86.8 72.7 79.6	(green)

EASY READ	TECHNICAL INDICATOR	INDICATOR TYPE	DATA SOURCE	AVAILABLE AT LOCAL LEVEL	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TREND
School leavers with low / no qualifications	School leavers achieving less than an SCQF Level 4 qualification (%)	Impact	https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-6-2024-edition/documents/	YES	3.8	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.6	4.0	
School leavers not going on to study or work	School leavers entering a non-positive initial destination (%)	Impact		YES	5.4	5.0	6.7	4.5	4.3	4.1	
Parental engagement with schools	Parents did not participate in any activities at child's school in last year (%)	Risk factor	Scottish Government (2022) Life at age 14: initial findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study	NO	NA	NA	10.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
NEW: Pastoral support	P5-S6 pupils who disagree that they have an adult to talk to at school if they are worried about something (%)	Risk factor	https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-and-wellbeing-census-scotland-2021-22/documents/	YES	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.6	NA	NA

CONCLUSIONS

This report has sought to map out the indicators of neglect that can be sourced through existing published datasets, and then provide an analysis of the data to consider key trends. In undertaking this exercise, it is encouraging to find that there a wide range of indicators available but many of these are best described as proxy indicators of neglect and could be linked to other causes.

Notwithstanding this caveat, the report provides oversight at the Scotland level of the indicators that are improving and those that are worsening. Beginning with the indicators with improving trends from 2018, these are:
- Maternity indicators (specifically maternal smoking rates and babies born small).
- Children hospitalised due to unintentional injuries or alcohol.
- Children registered on the Child Protection Register, including for children with neglect-related concerns.
- Children considered by the Children's Reporter on lack of parental care grounds.
- Attainment among primary school children.
- Positive school leaver destinations.

In contrast, the indicators that are presenting worsening trends from 2018 are:
- Children receiving foodbank parcels.
- Children living in temporary accommodation.
- Immunisation rates among babies.
- Developmental concerns among 1-5 year olds.
- Primary 1 school age children who are at risk of being underweight.
- School pupil attendance.
- Child deaths.

The paper has also shown the close relationship between children registered with neglect as a recorded concern and services finding it hard to engage with families.

The worsening trends outlined above point towards potential areas for policy and practice consideration. Specifically, and with close alignment to recommendations put forward by Bywaters and Skinner[2] (2022) of: (i) national 'levelling up' policies that cut family poverty, especially deep and persistent poverty, and insecurities affecting income, housing and employment; and (ii) the children's social care system engaging much more effectively with children's and families' basic material needs as a key factor for child protection; the Scotland data highlights the importance of:

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[2] Bywaters, P and Skinner, G (2022) *The Relationship Between Poverty and Child Abuse and Neglect: New Evidence*. Nuffield Foundation.

- Poverty-aware practice at a time when cost of living and child poverty levels are already high and worsening. Poverty can exacerbate family pressures and tensions, which in turn can lead to children experiencing neglect.
- Financial support for families whether in the form of increases to welfare payments, direct payments to families, and subsidising energy, housing and food costs.
- High quality relationship-based practice (that may extend to intensive family support services) to build connections with non-engaging families given the relationship between neglect and non-engaging families.
- Noticing and responding to early signs of potential neglect, such as developmental concerns of infants, child diet and obesity, non-attendance at school, parental mental health, and parents not engaging with services.

However, the data presented is neither comprehensive nor explanatory of the contributory factors behind these trends. National and local stakeholders are therefore encouraged to consider wider data and service intelligence that they have to understand neglect in their areas, the contributory factors (including changes to national and local practices), and what approaches have been effective in addressing neglect.

APPENDIX 1: SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THE 2022 NEGLECT SUB-GROUP MEMBERS FOR OTHER POTENTIAL DATA SOURCES TO INCLUDE

Societal neglect	• Provision and/or uptake of income maximisation activities (e.g. by social work) • Rate of unpaid household bills (e.g. energy bills or council tax) • Local authority housing team service data (e.g. unsustained tenancies) • Fire and Rescue service home safety data • Social Security Scotland data (e.g. Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment and Young Carer Grant applications and payments) • A child-specific analysis of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
Medical neglect	• Emergency Department admissions of children and young people • Alcohol consumption by pregnant mothers • Teenage pregnancies • Maternal low mood / mental health and domestic abuse data captured through Universal Health Visiting Pathway screening data • Infant mental health screening tools data • Non-attendance at hospital and/or GP appointments • Number of comprehensive medical assessments • Persistent headlice infestations • Adolescent sexual health
Physical neglect	• Recording of neglect as a concern at earlier stages of the child protection process (e.g. at Inter-agency Referral Discussion) • Number of children experiencing neglect whose parents had themselves experienced neglect as a child • Helpline data relating to neglect (e.g. from Childline or Parentline) • Domestic violence incidents
Lack of supervision and guidance	• Vaping among children
Educational neglect	• Home schooling data • Children missing from education data • Attendance and attainment levels by areas of deprivation (using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) • School counselling service uptake